

# Black 'Expressions of Excellence' in performance arts



The Anderson String Quartet, winners of the prestigious 1991 International Cleveland Quartet Competition, perform Tuesday night in Black Culture on Tour



or the first time, representatives of universities, libraries, cultural centers and the like will have a chance to see and hear some of the country's best black talent during the Black Culture on Tour in America Workshop and Showcase.

The evening performances by professional black artists are open to the public.

Titled "Expressions of Excellence," the workshops will be held Monday and Tuesday at the Newark Museum and have already attracted about 100 participants from all over the country.

In addition, on those evenings conference attendees and members of the general public will be able to enjoy performances by a variety of African America artists and organizations.

Members of the public are invited to buy tickets for the evening showcases. They cost \$15 at the door or in advance using Mastercard or Visa and telephoning the Woodson Foundation, which is located at



Forces of Nature Dance Company, N.Y., will entertain Monday night



BY  
PATRICIA  
C. TURNER

ON LINDEN PARK IN NEWARK.

Monday night, the showcase will run from 8:30 to 10 at the Mary Burch Theatre at Essex County College, 303 University Ave., Newark.

Tuesday, the showcase will be held at the Billy Johnson Auditorium in the Newark Museum, 49 Washington St., 8 to 10 p.m.

Monday's performers include the Carpetbag Theatre Company from Knoxville, Tenn., which for 18 years has presented all black theater and is known for such performances as "Crie?Crae!" and "Dark Girls and Prairie Queens."

Also on the bill are the Forces of Nature Dance Company from New York City, which offers African dance fused with modern dance and ballet, and which represented the United States at the 12th annual Festival for Peace and Youth in Moscow, and the Freedom Theatre from Philadelphia, America's oldest African American theater company, which has won awards for such productions as "Ceremonies in Dark Old Men," "Black Picture Show" and "Steal Away."

Family audiences enjoy the Brewery Puppet Troupe from Hempstead, N.Y., comprised of actors, musicians, singers and visual artists who bring to life a dazzling program using 3-foot-high hand and rod puppets. Two of their efforts have won special praise, "Little Davis, a Fantasy in Jazz," based on the New York bebop scene of the '40s and '50s, and "Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters," a traditional African folktale.

Also on stage Monday are "The Dinizulu African Dancers, Drummers and Singers" from Cambria Heights, N.Y., the oldest traditional African dance company in America. Their stage performances depict various aspects of life on the African continent through motion, music and chant.

Tuesday evening the program includes the Anderson String Quartet, currently in residence at the Eastman School of Music in

Please turn to Page 60



## His time to rise and shine

BROADWAY ACTOR TASTES SUCCESS AT AN EARLY AGE

By RITA EDILMAN

**T**he enticing aroma of baking banana bread permeates the air as a visitor rings the front doorbell of the Biggs residence in Hasbrouck Heights. The baker turns out to be Jason Biggs, one of Broadway's newest and youngest actors.

Jason appears as young Joey in the critically acclaimed "Conversations With My Father." The personable 14-year-old is preparing golden banana bread, a favorite family recipe, to bring to Judd Hirsch, the Tony Award-winning star of "Conversations," who plays Joey's father.

Thoughtfully, Biggs has already prepared another banana bread ahead of time after coming home from school today, and he retrieves it warm from the oven onto a platter. "As soon as this cools off a little more, we'll have some," says the Hasbrouck Heights Junior/Senior School wrestler and football player. "This is a family recipe that my grandmother handed down to my older sister, Heather. When Heather saw how much I loved it, she gave me the recipe, which she really guarded until then. This is my favorite thing to make."

Lined up on a tray on the kitchen table are the ingredients for the banana bread which will be given to Hirsch, whom the self-assured young professional calls "a really great guy." Pouring ingredients into a large bowl, he uses the mixing spoon with a confidence made perfect by practice. The straight-A student answers questions while mashing bananas in a separate bowl with a fork, then adds the ingredient to the batter, stirring vigorously.

His 20-year-old sister Heather had been in show business for quite some time, it turns out before "she decided to leave this business because she didn't enjoy it any longer," Biggs says. "She started me off, though, I've got to give her credit. I started with her agent when I was about six. Off and on, I did voiceovers, modeling, Nickelodeon and industrial films."

Giving the batter a final stir before pouring it into a baking pan, Biggs licks a mixing spoon and adds, "This is my



Photo by Samir Id-Deen

Broadway star Judd Hirsch and Jason Biggs, 14, of Hasbrouck Heights, taste the young actor's homemade banana bread backstage at the Royale Theater

Please turn to Page 53



...her said at those few times that Graae breezed near her.

...which is why he never mentioned he had another wife

...tual in format might have made this event truly memorable.

## Black performers to showcase talents

Continued from Page 49

Rochester, N.Y. and winners of the prestigious 1991 International Cleveland Quartet Competition. They recently appeared on the TV show "Good Morning America."

Sister Sadie and the Famous Biblettes, from Newark, will be heard Tuesday, offering "soul stirring gospel with a rhythm and blues flavor. These five women have performed with noted gospel performing artists, and have been "singing the songs of the Lord" for more than 20 years.

Another New Jersey artist on the program is Edward Pierson of Montclair, a natural basso profundo, best known for his tribute to Paul Robeson which incorporates narrative on Robeson's accomplishments spiced with musical selections Robeson made famous. Pierson is professor of voice at Montclair State College and worked with the New York City Opera for 14 years.

Larry Ridley and the Jazz Legacy Ensemble from New York, recognized for their ragtime, blues, jazz, spiritual and bebop, will also take part Tuesday.

Lorraine Gary, who is organizing the workshops and programs for the Woodson Foundation, explained that "people may not know how to find African American talent or how to attract black audiences."

There are already a National Black Theater Festival in North Carolina and a National Black Arts Festival in Atlanta, but Gary said the effort in Newark fills a need, by offering artists in music, dance and "some theater."

The Woodson Foundation is a



Larry Ridley & the Jazz Legacy Ensemble are among groups featured in the Woodson Foundation program

cultural organization that presents and tours African American artists in New Jersey and nationally, and administers an artists-in-the-schools program.

Gary explained that the Black Culture On Tour in America project began in 1984 with five artists who gave 26 performances in New Jersey schools and museums. In 1991, the

program represented 35 artists in music, drama, film, theater and literary arts, and coordinated more than 150 performances nationwide.

The "Expressions of Excellence Workshops" are arranged around two general themes. Monday is titled "Confronting Artistic Challenges in Presenting" while Tuesday is "Resources for Programming Collaborations."

Workshop leaders include Joan Myers Brown from the International Association for Blacks in Dance; Larry Leon Hamlin, National Black Theater Festival; Fran Holden, Association of Performing Arts Presenters; Stephanie Highley, National Black Arts Festival; Willard Jenkins, National Jazz Service Organization, and Mikki Shepard, 651-Kings Majestic Corp.

## Allergies?

Allergies are more than just a runny nose and watery eyes. Headaches, dizziness, congestion, nausea, rashes and chronic cough may be symptoms of allergies. Now, a simple blood test is all it takes.

**NATIONAL ALLERGY CENTERS**  
Environmental & Respiratory Care

Clifton & Parsippany  
201-882-0999

Roman Chucky, MD, Board Certified  
Most Major Medical Insurance Accepted  
Please Call for an Appointment

Woodbridge Center  
908-602-9700

### LIVE PSYCHIC Tarot Card Readings

Will advise and solve all problems: Love, marriage, business and health.

Remove Evil Spells  
For Personal Visit

Call 201-991-4980 or 201-624-9851  
"Special \$10.00- reading with this ad."